

Message Text

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21

ACTION EA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7805

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 4090

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

BANGKOK PASS SONGKHLA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MY TH

SUBJ: MALAYSIAN - THAI RELATIONS

REF: A. FBIS BANGKOK 210650Z AUG 74

B. KL 3177

C. KL 2914

D. JAKARTA 10321

1. SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER RAZAK'S AUG 20 SPEECH IN NORTHEAST
KELANTAN WITH ITS SIZEABLE POPULATION OF THAI MUSLIMS HAS GIVEN
RISE TO REPORTS HE WILL MEET NEXT MONTH WITH PREMIER SANYA TO
DISCUSS BORDER AND THAI INSURGENCY PROBLEMS. ALTHOUGH OFFICIAL
CONFIRMATION IS LACKING HERE, IT POSSIBLE BILATERAL MEETING WILL
BE HELD AFTER RAZAK'S VISIT TO AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND SEPT 6 -
18. RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH KELANTAN POLITICAL LEADERS AND
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RTG CONSUL IN KOTA BARU CONFIRMED MALAYSIA-THIA CORDIALITY

CONTINUES ON SURFACE BUT KELANTANESE ARE WATCHING SITUATION IN SOUTH THAILAND CAREFULLY FOR ANY SIGNS OF POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION WITH OR REPORTED RTG REPRESSION OF MUSLIM DISSIDENTS. END SUMMARY.

2. PM RAZAK SPEECH AUG 20 IN TUMPAT, KELANTAN, NEAR THAI BORDER WHERE THERE ARE APPROX 3000 THAIS, BOTH MUSLIM AND NON-MUSLIM, EMPHASIZED NEED FOR COOPERATION WITH RTG TO ELIMINATE PIRACY IN SOUTH CHINA SEA AND TO DEVELOP FISHING INDUSTRY ON COOPERATIVE BASIS. AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE (AFP) (REF A) AND GOM NEWS AGENCY BERNAMA FROM BANGKOK AUG 22 HAVE REPORTED THAT RAZAK WILL DISCUSS MALAYSIA-THAI COOPERATION AND PROBLEMS WITH SANYA AT "INFORMAL SUMMIT" IN PENANG NEXT MONTH. AFP REPORT ADDED THAT IN JUNE SANYA INVITED RAZAK TO DISCUSS SECESSIONIST PROBLEM BUT RAZAK UNABLE TO MAKE TRIP BECAUSE OF "BUSY SCHEDULE" (SEE ALSO REF B). ALTHOUGH WE HAVE HAD NO CONFIRMATION OF RAZAK-SANYA MEETING FROM OFFICIAL SOURCES, IT POSSIBLE BILATERAL MEETING MAY BE HELD AFTER RAZAK'S VISIT TO AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND SCHEDULED FOR SEP 6 - 18. IN VIEW OF STRONG GOI DENIAL(REF D), ASEAN SUMMIT MOOTED FOR JAKARTA IN MID-SEPT MAY NOT BE IN CARDS, THUS INCREASING LIKELIHOOD OF BILATERAL RAZAK-SANYA TALKS.

3. DURING VISIT TO KELANTAN AUG 18 - 20, EMBOFF MET WITH THAI CONSUL, SMARN SAKSANGUN, AND KELANTAN POLITICAL LEADERS INCLUDING DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER DATUK MOHAMED NASIR AND OTHER CLOSE ASSOCIATES OF DATUK ASRI, GOM MINISTER OF LAND DEVELOPMENT AND SPECIAL FUNCTIONS (ISLAMIC AFFAIRS). HIGHLIGHTS OF DISCUSSION WITH SMARN WERE AS FOLLOWS: (A) SMARN CLAIMED HE HAS CLOSE AND CORDIAL RELATIONS WITH KELANTAN OFFICIALS AND ASRI, HAVING ACCOMPANIED SEVERAL OF THEM ON VISITS TO SOUTHERN THAILAND AND BANGKOK; (B) HE IS CONFIDENT THAT KELANTANESE LEADERS "FULLY UNDERSTAND" RTG PROBLEMS IN SOUTH AND CHARACTERIZED ASRI STATEMENT (REF C AND RELATED REPORTS) AS "MINOR RIPPLE" DESIGNED ONLY TO APPEASE FAR-RIGHTSENTIMENT IN PAN MALAY ISLAMIC PARTY (PMIP); (C) HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT GOM OR KELANTAN STATE GOVT ARE IN ANY WAY SUPPORTING MUSLIM DISSIDENTS AND THAT PROBLEMS MAINLY STEM FROM CROSS-BORDER FLOW OF MIGRANT WORKERS, RELATIVES OF KELANTAN MALAYS, AND FEW IDENTIFIED SEPARATISTS-CUM-BANDITS; (D) HE BELIEVES THAT

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BORDER CONTROL CAN BE IMPROVED BUT WITHOUT STATIONING THAI TROOPS OR POLICE ON MALAYSIAN SIDE OF BORDER; AND (E) TUNKU YALA, REPUTED SEPARATIST LEADER, MAINTAINS CONTACTS WITH GROUPS IN SOUTHERN THAILAND BUT HAS NOT PLAYED ACTIVE ROLE IN DISSIDENCE "FOR MANY YEARS" AND HAS NOT HAD EXTENSIVE CONTACTS WITH ASRI OR KELANTAN POLITICAL LEADERS RECENTLY.

4. DESPITE THIS SEEMINGLY POSITIVE REPORT, SMARN ACKNOW-

LEDGED THAT HE IS LESS SURE OF ATTITUDES OF A FEW PMIP LEADERS, NOTABLY WAN ISMAIL, ASRI'S POLITICAL SECRETARY WHO MAY BE NEXT KELANTAN CHIEF MINISTER, AND DATUK NIK MAN WHO IS BEING PUT FORWARD AS CANDIDATE FOR CHIEF MINISTERSHIP BY EXTREMELY CONSERVATIVE, RELIGIOUS WING OF PARTY. (FYI, ASSUMING NATIONAL FRONT -- UMNO AND PMIP -- HANDILY DEFEATS INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES (PARA 6B, KL 4042), WAN ISMAIL APPEARS TO HAVE EDGE IN CONTEST FOR CHIEF MINISTERSHIP. PRESENT DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER, MOHAMED NASIR, IS SLATED TO STAY ON IN NUMBER TWO SLOT.)

5. SMARN ALSO STATED HE WAS NOT AWARE OF ALL ASPECTS OF GOM-RTG SECURITY OPERATIONS IN BORDER AREA, INCLUDING INTELLIGENCE GATHERING ACTIVITIES AND STATIONING OF ROYAL MALAYSIA POLICE SPECIAL BRANCH (SB) IN SOUTHERN THAILAND. IN FACT, SMARN SAID HE LEARNED OF EXISTENCE OF SB OFFICE IN YALA FROM NEWSPAPERS AFTER THAI STUDENTS PROTESTED ASRI STATEMENT IN MID-JUNE.

6. KELANTANESE POLITICAL LEADERS WERE IN GENERAL LESS SANGUINE ABOUT GOM-RTG RELATIONS AND MUSLIM DISSIDENCE. DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER MOHAMED NASIR TOLD EMBOFF THAT GOM-RTG AND KELANTAN-THAI RELATIONS WOULD REMAIN ON EVEN KEEL ONLY IF THERE IS MEASURABLE PROGRESS TOWARD MEETING BASIC MUSLIM GRIEVANCES, PARTICULARLY REGARDING EDUCATION (E.G., INCREASED ACCESS FOR MUSLIM STUDENTS TO THAI SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING, AND MORE MUSLIM RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS). ISMAIL DAUD, BUSINESSMAN AND CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF BOTH ASRI AND WAN ISMAIL, INDICATED THAT KELANTANESE ARE WATCHING SOUTHERN THAI SITUATION CLOSELY FOR EVIDENCE OF REPRESSION BY RTG (HE DID NOT SEEM TO KNOW ABOUT RECENT RTG MILITARY MEASURES IN SOUTH) AND WHETHER MUSLIMS WILL BE PERMITTED FIELD

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CANDIDATES FREELY IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS LATER THIS YEAR. REGARDING THAI ELECTIONS, ISMAIL DAUD ADDED THAT "POLITICAL SOLUTION" COULD BE ACHIEVED IF KNOWN DISSIDENTS AND SYMPATHIZERS WERE ALLOWED TO STAND FOR ELECTION AND TO DEAL WITH GOVT IN BANGKOK. ON OTHER HAND, ISMAIL DAUD AND SEVERAL OTHER PMIP POLITICAL CONTACTS TOLD EMBOFF THAT RTG DOES NOT SEEM TO BE MOVING TOWARD POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION WITH DISSIDENTS, AT LEAST ACCORDING TO THEIR "SOURCES" IN SOUTHERN THAILAND WHICH INCLUDE FARMERS WHO CROSS BORDER, RELATIVES, AND THAI MUSLIM STUDENTS IN KL AND KOTA BARU. ON THE OTHER HAND, TWO NATIONAL FRONT CANDIDATES WITH CONSTITUENCIES ON THAI BORDER COMMENTED THAT GOM MUST HASTEN RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN KELANTAN, NORTHERN KEDAH AND PERLIS TO GIVE MALAYS GREATER ECONOMIC STAKE SO THAT THEY WILL NOT BECOME DISENCHANTED WITH GOM AND IDENTIFY

WITH OR SUPPORT SEPARATISTS ACROSS BORDER.

6. COMMENT: BECAUSE OF RELIGIOUS EMOTIONS INVOLVED AND SPARSENESS OF INFORMATION AVAILABLE FROM OFFICIAL GOM SOURCES, IT IS DIFFICULT TO ASSESS ALL ASPECTS OF CROSS-BORDER RELATIONSHIPS. HOWEVER, IN POST-ELECTION PERIOD, PM RAZAK MAY BE ABLE TO TAKE MORE FORTHCOMING POSITION (FROM RTG POINT OF VIEW) ON SEPARATIST-RELATED PROBLEMS INCLUDING BETTER CONTROL OF CROSS-BORDER TRAFFIC.
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